

IN THE CLAIMS

1. A method of authenticating a user comprising:
receiving a request for information from a user,
receiving personal information associated with said user, said personal information including an address,
sending a permission request to said address, said permission request including a request for permission to provide information to said user,
receiving permission in response to said permission request, and
sending information to said user in response to said request for information.
2. The method of claim 1 wherein said personal information includes age data representative of said user's age.
3. The method of claim 1 wherein said personal information includes a user name.
4. The method of claim 1 wherein said personal information includes a category of information which said user is entitled to receive.
5. The method of claim 1 wherein said address comprises an e-mail address.
6. The method of claim 5 wherein said address is not the e-mail address of said user.

7. The method of claim 6 wherein said user is a child and said e-mail address is the child's parent's e-mail address.

8. The method of claim 1 wherein said personal information includes credit card information.

9. The method of claim 8 further comprising the steps of sending said credit card information back to said user and requesting verification of the accuracy of said credit card information.

10. The method of claim 8 further comprising prompting said user to provide credit card information if said user does not verify the accuracy of said credit card information.

11. The method of claim 8 wherein said user has the option of not including said credit card information in the personal information received during said step of receiving said personal information.

12. The method of claim 11 further comprising prompting said user to provide credit card information if said user opted not to include said credit card information in the personal information received during said step of receiving said personal information.

13. The method of claim 1 wherein said user information includes the value of a personal characteristic and said information is restricted to users satisfying a cut-off value of said personal characteristic, and further comprising the step of comparing the value of said personal characteristic with said cut-off value.

14. The method of claim 13 wherein said steps of sending and receiving permission are omitted if said value contained in said user information satisfies said cut-off.

15. The method of claim 1 wherein said personal information includes a second address associated with said user, said method further including the step of notifying said user at said second address if said permission was received in response to said permission request.

16. The method of claim 1 further comprising the step of sending a notification to said address if another request for information is received from said user before said permission is received.

17. The method of claim 1 wherein said step of sending said permission request is omitted if said permission was received in the past.

18. A method of authenticating the age of a user over a client/server network wherein said server has content restricted to users older than a particular age, said method comprising the steps of said client:

storing age data representative of said user's age on a client of said network,

after said step of said storing, sending a request to said server for access to said content,

receiving a request for said age data in response to the request for access to said content,

providing the age data in response to said request for said age data,

gaining access or being denied access to said content dependant upon whether said age data indicates that said user is older than said particular age.

19. The method of claim 18 wherein said steps are executed on a processor in a computer operated by said user.

20. The method of claim 18 further comprising maintaining a log of each request for content.

21. A method of authenticating a user over a client/server network wherein said server has content restricted to users older than a particular age, said method comprising the steps of said server:

receiving a request from said user for access to said content,

receiving personal information regarding said user, said personal information including age data representative of said user's age and an e-mail address on said network,

if said age data indicates that said user is older than said particular age, then sending an e-mail to said address indicating said request was received,

sending said content to said user if permission is received in response to said e-mail.

22. The method of claim 21 wherein said response is an e-mail sent in reply.

23. A method of authenticating a user comprising:

storing personal information regarding said user, said personal information including an e-mail address and a value associated with a personal characteristic,

sending a request for access to content restricted to users based on a cut-off associated with said personal characteristic,

sending said personal information to the provider of said content,

receiving at said e-mail address a request to permit access to said content, said step of receiving being dependant upon a comparison of the value stored in said personal information and said cut-off, and

sending the requested content dependant upon whether another user replies to said request to permit access.

24. The method of claim 23 wherein said value represents the age of said user and said cut-off represents the age a user must be in order to receive said content.

25. The method of claim 23 wherein said value of said personal characteristic represents whether a user is entitled to receive a particular category of content and said cut-off represents whether said content is in said category.

26. The method of claim 23 wherein said step of storing further includes storing a password associated with said personal information, and said method further includes preventing changes to said personal information without entry of said password.

27. The method of claim ____ wherein said steps of sending and receiving are implemented by a client in a client/server network.

28. The method of claim 27 wherein said network is the Internet and said content is requested via a browser.

29. The method of claim 23 further comprising the step of entering a password each time said browser is executed, and wherein said personal information is not sent unless said password is associated with said personal information.

30. The method of claim 23 wherein said step of storing personal information includes obtaining the age of said user and, if said age is below a particular age, then obtaining and storing said e-mail address.

31. The method of claim 30 wherein said cut-off represents a user's possible age and said particular age corresponds with said cut-off.

32. The method of claim 23 wherein step of storing said personal information comprises prompting said user to enter said personal information the first time the user send said request for said content.

33. A method of authenticating the age of a user comprising:

storing personal information regarding said user, said personal information including a value associated with a personal characteristic, said personal information further associated with biometric information of said user,

inputting biometric information,

sending a request for access to content restricted to users based on a cut-off associated with said personal characteristic,

sending said personal information to the provider of said content if said inputted biometric information matches the biometric information contained in said personal information, and receiving said content.

34. The method of claim 33 wherein said biometric information comprises a fingerprint.

35. A system of authenticating a user comprising:

a processor,

a set of instructions executable by said processor, said instructions including: receiving a request for information from a user; receiving user information associated with said user, said user information including an address; sending a permission request to said address, said permission request including a request for permission to provide information to said user; receiving permission in response to said permission request; and sending information to said user in response to said request for information.

36. The system of claim 35 wherein said processor and instructions are contained in web server.

37. The system of claim 36 wherein said set of instructions is a Java applet.

38. The system of claim 36 wherein said set of instructions is a plug-in to an internet browser.

39. A system of authenticating a user comprising:

a processor for executing instructions,

a biometric input device for obtaining information about a user,

instructions, said instructions including: storing personal information regarding said user, said personal information including a value associated with a personal characteristic, said personal information further associated with biometric information of said user; inputting biometric information; sending a request for access to content restricted to users based on a cut-off associated with said personal characteristic; sending said personal information to the provider of said content if said inputted biometric information matches the biometric information contained in said personal information; and receiving said content.